

Janet T. Mills  
Governor

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.  
Commissioner



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March 27, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Last week, we informed you that OCFS would be suspending in person visitation between children and their parents for two weeks, at which time the protocol would be reviewed to determine next steps based on current circumstances and CDC recommendations. A decision has been made that this protocol will remain in place through the end of April. If circumstances change and OCFS can safely resume in-person visits sooner, we will notify you of this change.

It is critical that children and their families are able to maintain connections, especially for children who may have questions about what is going on and wondering if their family members are safe and healthy.

Our family visitation partners, (HCI, AMHC and Penquis) are available to help coordinate and supervise video or telephone contact. They are reaching out to families to check in regarding visitation, offer support, facilitate and supervise where necessary. Anyone who is facilitating supervised contact is documenting the contact in our MACWIS visitation log to provide an ongoing record of this contact and how it is going.

We are working to provide quality contact through the use of video whenever possible. The only equipment needed is a cell phone. Free WIFI is available in many public businesses that can be accessed from outside to maintain physical distancing for families that don't have data plans or WIFI.

OCFS is unable to provide phones, tablets or computers, or phone cards, for those that do not own one. While we are encouraged to practice physical distancing, we also encourage families to use their support network to borrow a phone to maintain this contact with their child.

We know that visitation is a vital component of the reunification process. OCFS will be reviewing cases and making plans to ensure that quality contact is occurring. The majority of our OCFS staff are working remotely. You may still reach them by phone or e-mail, and we have limited staff in the office who may help direct your calls.

We are also working with our AAG's on a process to continue to provide discovery during this period of time when staff have limited access to printers, photocopiers and mail.

Thank you for your understanding during these challenging times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bobbi L. Johnson, LMSW".

Bobbi L. Johnson, LMSW  
Associate Director of Child Welfare Services  
Department of Health and Human Services  
Office of Child and Family Services